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STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

At the 4048th meeting of the Security Council, held on 24 September 1999 in connection with the Council's consideration of the item entitled "Small arms", the President of the Security Council made the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council recalls its primary responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security, in view of which its attention is drawn inevitably to small arms and light weapons as the most frequently used weapons in the majority of recent armed conflicts.

"The Security Council notes with grave concern that the destabilizing accumulation of small arms has contributed to the intensity and duration of armed conflicts. The Council also notes that the easy availability of small arms can be a contributing factor to undermining peace agreements, complicating peace-building efforts and impeding political, economic and social development. In this regard, the Council acknowledges that the challenge posed by small arms is multifaceted and involves security, humanitarian and development dimensions.

"The Security Council is deeply concerned that countries involved in, emerging from, or close to protracted armed conflicts are particularly vulnerable to violence resulting from the indiscriminate use of small arms in armed conflict. In this regard, the Council recalls the report of the Secretary-General on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict of 8 September (S/1999/957) and its resolution 1265 (1999) of 17 September 1999.

"The Security Council emphasizes that the right of individual and collective self-defence recognized in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations and the legitimate security demands of all countries should be fully taken into account. The Council recognizes that small arms are traded globally for legitimate security and commercial considerations. Bearing in mind the considerable volume of this trade, the Council underlines the vital importance of effective national regulations and controls on small arms transfers. The Council also encourages the

Governments of arms-exporting countries to exercise the highest degree of responsibility in these transactions.

"The Security Council emphasizes that the prevention of illicit trafficking is of immediate concern in the global search for ways and means to curb the wrongful use of small arms, including their use by terrorists.

"The Security Council welcomes the various initiatives that are currently under way, globally and regionally, to address the issue. These initiatives at the regional level include the Economic Community of West African States moratorium on the production and trade in small arms, the Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials, the European Union Joint Action on Small Arms and the European Union Code of Conduct on Arms Exports. At the global level, the Council welcomes the negotiation process on the elaboration of an international convention against transnational organized crime, including a draft Protocol Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials.

"The Security Council emphasizes the importance of regional cooperation in tackling the issue of illicit trafficking in small arms. Initiatives, such as the work done by the Southern African Development Community and the Southern African Regional Police Commissioners Coordinating Organisation, illustrate how regional cooperation can be harnessed to tackle small arms proliferation. The Council recognizes that while regions may sometimes benefit from the experiences of others, one region's experience cannot be extended to others without taking into account their different characteristics.

"The Security Council also welcomes and encourages efforts to prevent and combat the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of and illicit trafficking in small arms and invites Member States to involve civil society in these efforts.

"The Security Council notes with satisfaction the growing attention paid within the United Nations system to the problems associated with the destabilizing accumulation of small arms. The Council welcomes the initiative by the Secretary-General for Coordinated Action on Small Arms (CASA), designed to ensure a coherent and coordinated approach to the small arms issue within the United Nations system.

"The Security Council notes that although the humanitarian impact of small arms in a conflict situation is verifiably serious, a detailed analysis is not available. The Council therefore requests the Secretary-General to specifically include the humanitarian and socio-economic implications of the excessive and destabilizing accumulation and transfer of small arms and light weapons, including their illicit production and trade, in relevant studies he is currently undertaking.

"The Security Council calls for effective implementation of arms embargoes, imposed by the Council in its relevant resolutions. The Council

encourages Member States to provide the Sanctions Committees with available information on alleged violations of arms embargoes and recommends that the Chairmen of the Sanctions Committees invite relevant persons from organs, organizations and Committees of the United Nations system, as well as other intergovernmental and regional organizations and other parties concerned, to provide information on issues relating to the implementation and enforcement of arms embargoes.

"The Security Council also calls for measures to discourage arms flows to countries or regions engaged in or emerging from armed conflicts. The Council encourages Member States to establish and abide by voluntary national or regional moratoria on arms transfers with a view to facilitating the process of reconciliation in these countries or regions. The Council recalls the precedents for such moratoria and the international support extended for their implementation.

"The Security Council recognizes the importance of incorporating, as appropriate, within specific peace agreements, with the consent of the parties, and on a case-by-case basis within United Nations peacekeeping mandates, clear terms for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants, including the safe and timely disposal of arms and ammunition. The Council requests the Secretary-General to provide the negotiators of peace accords with a record of best practice based upon experience in the field.

"The Security Council requests the Secretary-General to develop a reference manual for use in the field on ecologically safe methods of weapons destruction in order better to enable Member States to ensure the disposal of weapons voluntarily surrendered by civilians or retrieved from former combatants. The Council invites Member States to facilitate the preparation of such a manual.

"The Security Council welcomes the recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms (A/54/258), including the convening of an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects no later than 2001, noting the offer by Switzerland to host the conference. The Council encourages Member States to participate actively and constructively in the conference and any preparatory meetings, taking into account the recommendations contained in this Statement, with a view to ensuring that the conference makes a meaningful and lasting contribution to reducing the incidence of illicit arms trafficking."